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NEWS RELEASE

March 3, 1997

SISTER-CITY CONNECTION IS A WIN-WIN FOR UM

MISSOULA —

Missoula's sister-city connection with Neckargemuend, Germany, looks like a win-win deal for The University of Montana.

In mid-February, 17 UM students flew to the sister city, where they're privileged to live with families for a month while taking special courses at nearby University of Heidelberg. And last August, as a result of the connection, UM's foreign languages and literatures department landed two native German speakers as visiting faculty for 1996-97: Rudiger Giebel and his wife, Gisela, who teaches part time.

Foreign languages Chair Jerry Fetz sees their additions to the department and campus as a genuine plus.

"The presence of the Giebels at UM this year has provided a fresh, contemporary, insider's perspective in and out of German classes on everything from the German school system and contemporary life in the newly united Germany to German-American relations and the 'new' Europe," he said. "Their presence has also added an important dimension to our annual study abroad program for students of German."

It seems the arrangement has been a winner for the Giebels, too, including their daughter Marion, a freshman at UM this year.

"We all three have had a fantastic time here," Rudiger Giebel said. They've found life to

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be more "easy going" than in Germany and people friendlier and more helpful, he said.

He told about having once lost his "binder" in one of the University Center's eating spots. Sure he'd left it on a tray soon to be emptied into the garbage, he made bold to go into the kitchen. Immediately, he said, members of the staff began helping him look for his binder, which someone found lying on the table where he'd left it. Germans don't have that "positive attitude toward rendering service," he said.

At home in Germany, Gisela teaches elementary school, and Rudiger teaches geography and English as a second language at the Gymnasium of Neckarbischofsheim. Their sojourn in Missoula really began in 1993, when, as members of Neckargemeund's choir, Rudiger and Gisela participated in Missoula's summer choral festival. They met Fetz then and stayed in touch. The rest is history.

Their culture shock after coming to Missoula last fall was mild and short-lived, Giebel said. And although Marion sorely missed her friends at first, she's since had a complete change of heart: She made the dean's list fall semester and wants to spend another year at UM even though her parents will go back to Germany at the end of the school year.

The only thing the two elder Giebels have missed is bread.

"This may sound funny," Giebel said, "but at home we have all different breads, and we miss the dark bread especially."

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Giebel.rl